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AN OLD ENGLISH PROVERB.

IN the Old English Chronicle A. D. 1003 (C, D, E), the story of Ælfric's treacherous behavior is followed by the general remark: *Ðonne se heretoga wacað, þonne bið eall se here swiðe gehindred*. To judge from Plummer's edition, the sentence is marked as a quotation in MS. E (by the use of red letters?), and the introduction: *swa hit gecweden is*, seems to point to its proverbial nature; cf. A. D. 1130: *oc man seið to biworde, hæge sitteð þa aceres dæleth*. How far the passage is to be claimed as an Old English proverb in the strict sense, we are not certain.

Plummer (2. 183) has called attention to a similar saying: *si dux timidus erit, quomodo salvabitur miles?* occurring in Alcuin's letters (Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents* 3. 535). (It is preceded by two rhetorical interrogations in the same strain: *Si fugit vexillum ferens, quid facit exercitus?* *Si tuba tacet in castris, quis se praeparat ad bellum?*¹)

Also a passage in Ælfred's *Pastoral Care* (129. 8 ff.) deserves to be compared with it: *sua eac bið se here eal idel, ðonne he on oðer folc winnan sceal, gif se heretoga dwolað*. Though it is founded on Gregory's original: *in exploratione hostium frustra exercitus velociter sequitur, si ab ipso duce itineris erratur* (Bk. 2, chap. 7), the rather free and pointed version seems suggestive of proverbial wisdom.

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¹ This last evidently from 1 Cor. 14. 8.—ED.